

COUNTRY OPERATIONS PLAN

Country: DJIBOUTI

Planning Year: 2002

Executive Summary

a) Context (beneficiary Population and Themes)

Djibouti is a country with an estimated population of 650,000(1996 census) composed of Issas and Afars of Somali origin. Most of the land is volcanic remains and has limited economic significance, hardly any mineral deposits and no other sources of energy. The country derives its income from port services to neighbouring Ethiopia and from its bilateral and multilateral ties. More than half the population lives in Djibouti city together with migrants from neighbouring Somalia and Ethiopia, who come to Djibouti in search of economic benefits and because of ethnic affiliation. These migrants constitute an estimated 20 % of the population.

According to UN Human Development rating, Djibouti is considered a least developed country (LDC), with the majority of its' people living under the poverty line. The ever-increasing illegal migrant patterns from Somalia and Ethiopia exert enormous pressure on an already weak socio-economic structure. The Government has to struggle to sustain minimum standards of living for its population. In 2000, only six months salaries were paid, intermittently, to the Civil Servants.

On 7 December 2000 an attempted *coup d'etat* staged by General Yassin Head of the National Police Force was foiled. This had repercussions on the population as the Government undertook a vast search for illegal arms in the city.

The economic and political situation is further aggravated by:

- The presence and non-payment of demobilisation packages of many demobilised soldiers;
- Frequent demonstrations by young unemployed people and students, due to deterioration in basic social services and opportunities
- Growing poverty among the city dwellers, the presence of IDPs from rural areas and from Ethiopia and Somalia.
- The slow pace of implementation of the reconciliation accord with FRUD, the opposition party and
- The financial impact that hosting the Somali Peace Conference in Arta had on the country's economy.

On the international scene, the Government of Djibouti continued to maintain close political and economic relations with Ethiopia, with increasing reliance and usage of the port by the latter. Relations with Eritrea improved after the end of the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea and although the border remained closed, there is a weekly flight between Djibouti and Asmara. Both Presidents exchanged visits in 2000 and the Eritrean embassy, which was closed at the outbreak of the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea, has now been reopened.

On the contrary, relations between Somaliland and Djibouti deteriorated because of Somaliland's opposition to the Arta Peace and Reconciliation for Somalia. The border between the two was closed intermittently in 2000. The Somaliland authorities used this situation as an argument to deny repatriation to its nationals who are presently refugees in Djibouti, claiming that they might be infiltrators.

Protection Issues

The Government of Djibouti has ratified the 1951 Convention relative to the status of refugees and the 1967 Protocol, however, it has not acceded to the OAU Convention and does not have a national refugee legislation. UNHCR has been promoting the adoption by the Government of a refugee law, which would define the legal basis for a clear asylum policy in Djibouti. The Bureau for the Eligibility Committee is fully operational and is funded by UNHCR. UNHCR has observer status on the national Eligibility Commission, which resumed sitting on 8 January 2001. The Government regularly rounds up and expels illegal migrants an unfortunate practice which threatens the status and well being of genuine asylum seekers who are sometimes exposed to arbitrary arrests.

UNHCR operations, especially the search for durable solutions, are hampered by the negative attitude of Somaliland authorities towards the repatriation of the over 21,000 Somali refugees on Djibouti territory. Sustained efforts are ongoing to resolve this situation as the refugees themselves have expressed their desire to return to their homes. For the Southern Somalis, the option of an organised mass repatriation is not viable at present, due to continued instability in the areas of return, however volunteers are assisted to repatriate

Resettlement remains an important tool of international protection. UNHCR intends to make increased use of the resettlement possibilities available in 2002 to provide international protection for the refugees. Identification of deserving cases for resettlement is an ongoing process.

Overview of beneficiary population

Since its' independence in 1977, Djibouti has been hosting different waves of refugees on its territory. There were major refugee influxes from Ethiopia in 1977/78 as a result of the Ogaden war and following the fall of the Mengistu regime in 1991. Similarly, the civil war in northwest Somalia and the fall of Siad Barre in Somalia forced many Somalis to flee their country and seek refuge in Djibouti. Consequently, UNHCR opened an Office in Djibouti to ensure the protection of these refugees. The Republic of Djibouti hosts 23,243 refugees composed of 20706 Somalis, 2503 Ethiopians and 34 from other countries. 21,124 refugees are residing in Holl-Holl and Ali-Addeh camps and the remaining 2119 are urban based.

UNHCR's role in Djibouti (protection, assistance, monitoring and co-ordination)

UNHCR co-ordinates all the activities pertaining to refugee matters in Djibouti, including protection and provision of assistance. As such, UNHCR undertakes needs assessment, monitoring and supervision of Government and non-Governmental organisations involved in refugee activities, ensuring that all interested parties are duly and regularly informed on refugee matters

As long as the situation in Somalia remains volatile any sustainable return of refugees will prove difficult. Meanwhile the fragile economic situation of Djibouti will not

allow any local integration. UNHCR presence will continue to be necessary in Djibouti to protect and assist the refugees, as change in the situation is not foreseen in 2002.

UNHCR will provide assistance in 2002 emphasising gender mainstreaming and environment activities. Particular attention will continue to be paid to the health and educational needs of children and adolescents. Environmental degradation, resulting from the presence of large numbers of refugees in the fragile physical environment of Djibouti is a concern. The pilot project targeting tree planting, home gardening, domestic energy saving methods, which has been successfully implemented in Holl Holl refugee camp will be extended to Ali Addeh camp in 2002.

Following the peace agreement signed in February 2000 between the Djibouti government and the Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy (FRUD) UNHCR signed a tripartite agreement with the Governments of Ethiopia and Djibouti for the voluntary repatriation of some 1500 Djibouti Afar refugees from Ethiopia. The repatriation operation is planned to commence in May 2001.

Capacity and presence of implementing partners

With respect to the implementation strategy, ONARS, the governmental agency responsible for refugee matters, manages the camps. In 2002, UNHCR will seek ways to reduce the involvement of ONARS in the implementation of activities in the camps by associating other partners.

On the implementing partners include AMDA (Association of Medical Doctors of Asia), an International NGO, is responsible for the health sector, UNESCO-PEER covers primary education activities and EPED (Eglise Protestante Evangelique de Djibouti) assists urban refugees. ISERST), a Government research institute, is responsible for the environment project as well as analysis of water in the camps. CARITAS is engaged in facilitating micro-credit schemes for urban-based women refugees and an agreement was signed with a local NGO APEF (Association pour la Promotion et l'Epanouissement de la Famille) for the implementation of the micro-credit schemes for refugee women. A project with UNDP/UNOPS to conduct land mine awareness campaigns will be implemented in 2001.

Regular co-ordination meetings are held with implementing partners on operational issues. UNHCR plans to carry out training activities in programme management, computer literacy, basic accountancy and protection, to enhance the performance of staff of implementing partners, government officials who deal with refugee matters and its own staff.

UNHCR Djibouti works in close co-operation with WFP (food for refugees) and UNESCO (education) and takes active part in the UN country team programmes led by the UNDP Resident Co-ordinator. The Office is also involved in the preparation of the UNHCR/IGAD/UNDP Initiative for rehabilitation of refugee affected areas.

Selected Programme Goals and Objectives

<p>Name of beneficiary Population:</p> <p>Somali and Ethiopian refugees</p>	
<p>Main goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide international protection and search for durable solutions for the refugees. • Provide acceptable standards of assistance to all refugees, paying particular attention to groups with special needs. • Reduce the degradation of the environment in and around the camps. 	
<p>Principal Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • whenever possible, assist Somali refugees from NW Somalia, Awdal Region to go back to their homes • Refugees enjoy their rights to quality asylum, having access to relevant identity documents. • Refugees have access to minimum standards that will ensure their health. • Refugees are well informed about the dangers of HIV/AIDS and its prevention • All school age children in camps enrol for primary education. • Refugee women participate in the activities of the community with equal opportunities. • Preserve and protect the environment. • Undertake a review of the assistance programme • Resettle refugees who meet the criteria 	<p>Related Outputs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closure of Ali Addeh camp and scaling down of the programme after repatriation • Refugees are issued identity documents so that they do not suffer arbitrary arrests linked with illegal immigrants round-ups. • Refugees are in good health and informed about reproductive health and HIV/AIDS prevention • children between the ages of 7 to 12 receive primary education • Women are organised and more involved in community activities. • Refugees plant more trees, do gardening activities to improve the quality of their food, use energy saving devices, thereby reducing environmental degradation • The quality of assistance provided and the extent of future involvement of refugees and other partners determined • Increased number of refugees are resettled